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ABSTRACT

Designed for use by volunteers in the program, this handbook describes the "Rockin' Readers" program, in which senior-citizen volunteers are matched with specifically targeted at-risk children in Alachua County, Florida, who tested below their peer group in language development and reading readiness skills. The handbook notes that each volunteer read aloud to the same child weekly, sharing the love of stories and an awareness of reading with that child. The handbook discusses the benefits of read aloud; the job description for a Rockin' Readers volunteer; working with students; intellectual, social, and emotional development of 4-, 5-, 6-, and 7-year-old children; getting started; "do's and dont's" of reading aloud; tips on selecting good books; and a list of 75 predictable books, wordless picture books, picture books with text, poetry, and concept books recommended for reading aloud to children. Contains 20 references and 11 notes. (RS)

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School Board of Alachua County, Florida

Rockin' Readers Handbook

Produced through an Enhancement Grant
from the Florida Department of Education
Office of Business & Citizen Partnerships

Alachua County School Volunteer Program
620 East University Avenue
Gainesville, Florida 32601

INTRODUCTION

"Is Heckedy Peg a boy or girl?" Ashley asked as she settled onto the lap of the Rockin' Reader for the reading of the story by Audrey and Don Wood.

"Let's find out," the volunteer responded and opened the book to the title page where Ashley "read" the title, sweeping her fingers along the words.

The Rockin' Reader read the names of the author and illustrator, to which Ashley immediately responded, "He has a letter like my other name, 'Denise,'" pointing to the D in illustrator Don Wood's name.

This lap-reading session was just the beginning of an event that was not simply the reading of a story, but an interaction that included reading, listening, discussing, critical thinking and construction of meaning.[1]

"Reading is probably the most widely used of all the processes of gaining knowledge. For this reason, reading is of vital importance to the learner, and it needs to be a pleasant and positive experience. If the child's early memories of reading are happy, he or she will want them to be repeated. This association will strengthen the inner drive to read and learn."[2]

As a Rockin' Reader you can play an important part in assuring that a child's early reading experiences are happy and pleasant. As you read enjoyable stories aloud to him, you will be helping him improve his reading readiness skills, thus preparing him for learning to read. In addition, you will find that while encouraging the child in language development and pre-reading skills, you are also enhancing his self-esteem and emotional maturity through your nurturing relationship with him.

"There is no experience better for the heart than reaching down and lifting people up."

– Holmer

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WHY READ ALOUD

According to the Report of the Commission on Reading (1985), "the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."[3] "Children who learn to read are ones who have been read to as young children."[4] The most significant factor in determining a child's success in reading is how much that child has been read to by siblings, parents, or other caring adults.[5] Whether a child is a reader or non-reader is not determined by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, nor I.Q.; the differences stem from being read to and having access to print.[6]

The benefits of reading aloud to children are numerous. Steven Silvern, for example, found that reading to children increases their reading achievement, listening and speaking abilities, vocabulary, ability to recognize letters and symbols, ability to use more complex sentences and overall concept development.[7] In addition to these academic benefits, they also get a great deal of emotional satisfaction from the read-aloud experience.[8] Children are given an adult's total attention and have opportunities to interact with an adult in a warm, supportive and nonthreatening setting. As a result, they associate reading with positive feelings and look forward to the opportunity to experience those feelings again. They feel better about themselves, recognizing that someone considers they are important enough to take twenty minutes to read a book just to them.

Although the research indicates that children who come from homes that value reading and who have been read to from an early age are generally the best readers,[9] it also indicates that it is not too late to begin exposing children to stories and reading at school.[10] There is just no substitute for reading one-on-one with an accomplished reader.[11]

– Suzanne Colvin, Ph.D.,
Supervisor, Early Childhood Education
Alachua County Public Schools

"Few children learn to love books by themselves. . . . Someone has to show them the way."

– Orville Prescott

WHY READ ALOUD (CONTINUED)

The benefits to a child from a read-aloud relationship include:

- stimulating in him the desire to learn to read.
- providing a model of skillful oral reading.
- introducing new words and expanding his vocabulary base.
- increasing his attention span.
- exposing him to various forms of literature.
- developing in him a sense of story.
- helping him acquire listening skills.
- enriching him with increased general knowledge.
- providing the opportunity for him to build mental images while listening.
- adding pleasure to his day.

"You became a reader because you saw and heard someone you admired enjoying the experience, someone led you to the world of books even before you could read, let you taste the magic of stories."

– Trelease

ROCKIN' READERS JOB DESCRIPTION

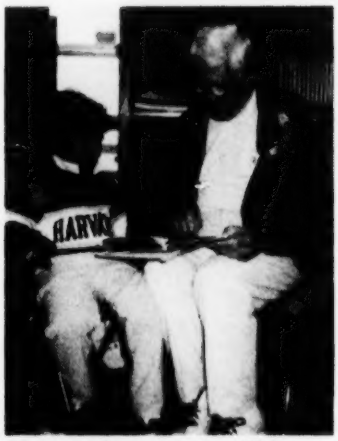
JOB TITLE
Rockin' Reader

SUPERVISOR
Classroom teacher or designated school-based coordinator.

OBJECTIVE
To assist young children in acquiring the skills needed for learning to read, to foster in them an appreciation of literature and a love for reading, and to help them develop self-esteem and emotional maturity through a nurturing relationship.

DUTIES
1. Meet with assigned students one-to-one and read selected stories to them.
2. Develop a friendly, supportive relationship with the student.

QUALIFICATIONS
Ability to interact with small children. Cheerful and cooperative attitude. Ability to read to a child for a short period of time. Patience.



"I am only one; but still I am One. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. I will not refuse to do the something I can do."

– Keller

GRADE/AGE SERVED
Pre-Kindergarten through second grade.

TRAINING AVAILABLE
A training manual is available for all volunteers. Workshops will be held periodically with emphasis on such topics as early childhood development, book selection, and effective reading aloud skills.

TIME
Weekly, for approximately one hour. More often if desired.

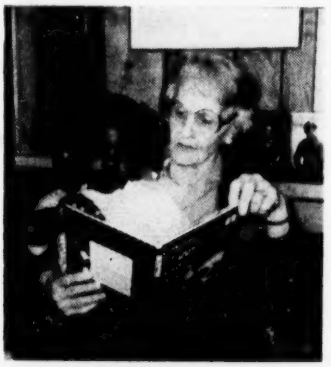
WORKING WITH YOUR STUDENT

A volunteer who works with a young child occupies a very special place in the school program. He is there to augment the role of the classroom teacher by enriching and reinforcing the work of the teacher through interacting with the child, verbalizing, and role modeling.

The overall goals with which a Rockin' Reader volunteer is involved include:

- Encouraging a child's feelings of self worth and confidence.
- Enriching a child's language growth by example and by a great deal of verbal interaction.
- Helping a child in decision making (not making decisions for him).
- Enhancing thinking skills (by asking relevant questions).
- Helping the child develop self-discipline.

In order to work with young children effectively, one must know and understand how young children grow, develop, and learn. Because children come to school in all stages of readiness, they have different abilities and different needs. It is important that the volunteer accept the child where he is and help the child grow by exposing him to many activities, materials, and experiences. A volunteer will be working with a child to help him develop as fully as possible at each stage of his growth.



"Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

– Barrie

AGES AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The following is a list of typical characteristics of four-, five-, six-, and seven-year-old children. These characteristics should not be regarded as rigid norms; they simply show the kinds of behaviors that tend to occur at each age. It is important to note that a disadvantaged child frequently has characteristics of a younger age group.

The Four-Year-Old

Emotional Development:

- Has capacity for friendship.
- Shows fear of imaginary characters—unable to distinguish between fable and truth.
- Is learning to express sympathy.
- Likes to brag; is highly sure of himself.
- Shows decrease in crying as an anger response.
- May be aggressive.
- Demonstrates extreme emotions (loves a lot and hates a lot).
- Seeks approval of adults.

Social Development:

- Is independent.
- Is dependable.
- Goes from one thing to another.
- Tries to gain attention by showing off.
- Prefers children to adults but still has strong family ties.
- Has imaginary playmates.
- Dislikes isolation from the group.
- Likes to plan ahead.
- Needs firmness and freedom, both within limits.
- Seeks regularity and rules in the happenings around him.

"Joyous, exuberant, energetic, ridiculous, untrammeled—ready for anything."

– Ames and Ilg

The Four-Year-Old

Intellectual Development:

- Likes explanation and is curious.
- Beginning interest in letters and numbers.
- Knows colors.
- Knows what familiar animals do or say.
- Likes new, big words.
- Likes to make up words and rhymes.
- Enjoys repetition.
- Has vivid imagination; tells tall tales.
- Expands language beyond the immediate situation.
- Can tell what is happening in pictures.
- Has memory for sentences.

The Five-Year-Old

Emotional Development:

- Needs a sense of belonging.
- Responds to praise and encouragement and consistent direction.
- Searches for trust, fairness, and definite standards.
- Gains a feeling of security from definite routine.
- May allow the emotional tone of the morning to govern the entire day.
- Is prone to show fear of the new and unusual.
- Is not always able to distinguish right from wrong by adult standards.
- Has growing sense of humor.

"Five wants to be good, means to be good, and more often than not succeeds in being good."

– Ames and Ilg

AGES AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

The Five-Year-Old

Social Development:

- Seeks companionship of other children and is anxious to gain group approval.
- Plays best in groups of two to seven children.
- Needs adult help in learning to share materials and taking turns.
- Needs to be like and look like age-mates.
- Is not able to work and play without constant approval.
- Is willing and eager to assume responsibility within his level of maturity, but does not always assume responsibility for care of personal belongings.
- Is self-centered.
- Is a great talker.

Intellectual Development:

- Is active, eager, interested, curious.
- Learns by doing, experiencing, observing, questioning, imitating, examining, exploring and investigating.
- Derives satisfaction from the doing rather than from the product.
- Is eager to learn but is not ready for formal abstract work.
- Cannot always distinguish between fact and fancy.
- Has a short attention and interest span.
- Likes to be read to.
- Needs much opportunity to manipulate and experiment with tools, materials and ideas.
- Can carry play from one day to another.

"Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see."
– School Bulletin Board
Orange County, NJ

The Six-Year-Old

Emotional Development:

- Tries to leave babyhood behind.
- Enjoys being with adults—wants to help do tasks around house or schoolroom.
- May demand attention, has little regard for others.
- Feels no responsibility for group goals—may join a group activity, but will leave if he doesn't get desired part.
- Has difficult time with decisions and choices.

Social Development:

- Displays little social responsibility for organized games.
- Wants to be first; scrambles for whatever he wants with pushing, fighting, and quarreling.
- Wants to be the leader and to win—it is hard to lose.
- Has keen sense of competition, often boasting and comparing possessions, heights, and even families.
- Enjoys dramatic play.

Intellectual Development:

- Enjoys trying to make things but cannot be expected to produce finished products.
- Has short interest span; cannot sit still for long periods of time.
- Has difficulty cutting well or doing handwork which requires much skill or control.
- Is very eager to learn—assimilates countless words and phrases; describes objects more completely; expands vocabulary.
- Learns by concrete observations and direct participation.
- Can identify opposite and rhyming words.

"'Six is a hard age to be,' confided one little boy to his mother."

– Ames and Ilg

AGES AND STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT (CONTINUED)

The Six-Year-Old

Intellectual Development, continued:

- Can define simple words.
- Can solve many problems independently.

The Seven-Year-Old

Emotional Development:

- Is self-absorbed, worries.
- May lack self-confidence.
- May withdraw from conflict rather than stay and resist.
- Often directs anger toward himself.
- Has a need for "fairness."
- Needs to be perfect and may be overly concerned about his mistakes.
- Is persistent.
- Is conscientious.
- Wants to be good.
- May complain a lot.

Social Development:

- Gets along well with adults.
- Likes to spend time in solitary activities.
- Plays reasonably well with others most of the time, but his group play is loosely organized.
- Is more adept at meeting strangers.
- Wants a place in the group with other school children. May be concerned that the other children don't like him.

"Nobody, but nobody will ever be as much fun or as much trouble to you as your lively, lovely, difficult six-year-old."

– Ames and Ilg

The Seven-Year-Old

Intellectual Development:

- Is a good listener.
- May be obsessive in his interests, spending hours doing and talking about his favorite activities.
- Can get the sense of a story even without knowing all the words.
- Enjoys fairy tales.
- Recognizes familiar words.
- May read quite well.
- Likes to write.
- Has an awareness of ends. Wants to know how many pages a book has, or how far he's supposed to read.
- May be able to tell time and is aware of the passage of time.

"An age of withdrawal, of pulling in, of calming down."
- Ames and Haber

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GETTING STARTED

Introducing the Book

Many children have had little, if any, exposure to books; therefore, it is important to show them the parts of the book:

- title,
- author,
- illustrator,
- where the book begins, and
- where it ends.

Explain to the child that the title is what the book is about, the author is the person who wrote the book, and the illustrator is the person who drew the pictures for the book. The child may want to make predictions about what the book is about from the title or the illustrations. Show the child how reading starts at the top of the page and goes down, line by line, from left to right. Show the child how the illustrations tell about or enhance the story. After the child has the knowledge about the parts of a book, he will feel more confident when starting another book.

"You are the same today that you'll be five years from now except for two things: the people you meet and the books you read.

– McMillan

The First Session

Your first day at school as a Rockin' Reader is a day to get acquainted with your new student and to become comfortable in the school. Someone will introduce you to your child or children and help you find a place to read. Please understand that not all of our schools have rocking chairs and quiet rooms for reading. Most schools are crowded and space is at a premium. In fact, you may even find that there are other activities going on in the area in which you are reading. The children are used to all of this action around them so the distractions may not bother them as much as they bother you.

During your first session, you will want to learn your child's name, and let him know what to call you. Chat about such things as his school, family, likes and dislikes, and favorite TV shows. Tell him about you—your job or studies, your children or grandchildren, and what you like to do. If you'd like, take a very short book with you to share, something cheerful with wonderful illustrations. Just have a good time, and let the child know you will be back next week.

"You never know when you're making a memory."
– Jones

DO'S AND DON'TS OF READING ALOUD

Do:

- Allow the child to settle down and adjust body and mind to the story. Mood is an important factor in listening.
- Remember that the art of listening is an acquired one. It must be taught and cultivated gradually. It does not happen overnight.
- Vary the length and subject matter of your reading. Occasionally read above the child's intellectual level and challenge his mind.
- Make sure the child can see the pictures.
- Read slowly enough for the child to build mental pictures of what he just heard you read.
- Read in a clear voice, using plenty of vocal expression. Enthusiasm and inflection make the story more interesting.
- Talk with the child about what you are reading. Discuss the pictures and illustrations with the child as you read to them, and integrate the illustrations into the story.
- Show appreciation for the book by handling it carefully, treating it as a treasure.
- Very young children have short attention spans. Sometimes when the child starts wiggling or seems to be distracted, you may want to take a short break from the reading and use this opportunity to interact with the child in a different manner.
- After reading a story, allow time to talk about it with the child. Discuss the book and how the child "feels" about the story.

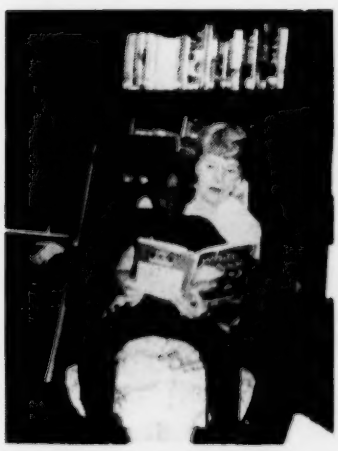
"In concentrating almost exclusively on teaching the child how to read, we have forgotten to teach him to want to read."

– Trelease

DO'S AND DON'TS OF READING ALOUD (CONTINUED)

Don't:

- Read stories that you don't enjoy yourself. Your dislike will show and that defeats your purpose.
- Continue reading the book once it is obvious that it was a poor choice. Admit the mistake and choose another. (You can avoid the problem by prereading the book yourself.)
- Be unnerved by questions during the reading, particularly from very young children. Foster curiosity with patient answers—then resume your reading.



"A child miseducated is a child lost."

– Kennedy

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GIFTS FOR CHILDREN

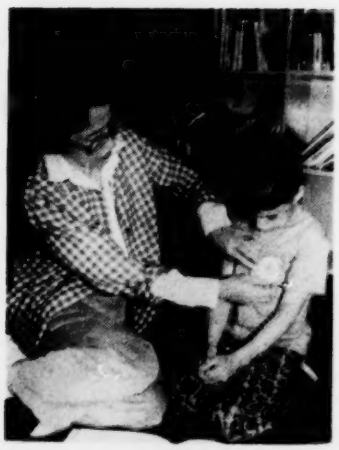
It is certainly neither necessary nor expected that you bring gifts for your child. However, many volunteers establish special relationships with the children to whom they read, and they want to bring them occasional treats. Some simple, inexpensive gifts may include:

- novelty stickers
- pretty pictures cut from a magazine
- items from your "junk mail," such as wildlife stamps
- almost any "freebie" that you can find, such as a pencil from a bank

You also may want to bring a small item which enhances and enriches your story. For example, if you are reading *Blueberries for Sal,* you may wish to bring blueberries or blueberry muffins—honey if you read *The Big Honey Hunt.*

For a special occasion, such as a holiday, the child's birthday, or your final session together, you may wish to give the child a book.

Note: Please check with your school-based contact person or the teacher before giving any gifts to be sure of your school's policies along this line.



"The most precious gift you can give a child is time."

– Anonymous

TIPS ON SELECTING GOOD BOOKS

When selecting a book to read to a child, choose one that you enjoy yourself. Your enthusiasm for a book will show in the reading. Many excellent books are available for reading aloud. You may select books from the school's media center or from the public library or one of its bookmobiles. The media specialists can help in the selection of age-appropriate books.

In the following section some specific books are recommended. The guidelines listed below may help you to select other appropriate books for young children.

- Choose books that are well-written, with well-drawn characters, an important theme, a lively plot, and an appealing style.
- Choose books with attractive, interesting, and enjoyable illustrations that promote a love of beauty.
- Choose books which support the cultural background of your child.
- Choose books that present a positive role model for the minority child.
- Choose books that the child can understand.
- Choose books that stimulate the imagination.
- Choose books that the child has already enjoyed, as younger children frequently like repetition of the same book.
- Choose books that will invite participation.
- Choose books with interesting language that will enrich the child's vocabulary and show him how language is used in a book.
- Choose several books by the same author.
- Choose books slightly above the child's reading ability to extend his language development.

"A good book is the best of friends, the same today and forever."

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN

The following sections will acquaint you with the types of books young children enjoy and offer suggestions of specific books you might choose.

Predictable Books

Predictable books contain word or sentence patterns which are repeated often enough so that the child can predict them and thus begin to join in the reading. Predictable books help the child develop the confidence to read books on his own after hearing them read aloud.

- *Are You My Mother?,* P.D. Eastman, Random House, 1960.
- *Brown, Brown Bear, What Do You See?,* Bill Martin, Jr., Hold, 1983.
- *Cat on the Mat,* Brian Wildsmith, Oxford University Press, 1982.
- *Chicken Soup with Rice,* Maurice Sendak, Harper, 1962.
- *Do You Want to be My Friend?,* Eric Carle, Putnam, 1971.
- *Goodnight Moon*, Margaret Wise Brown, Harper, 1977.
- *Henny Penny*, Paul Galdone, Clarion, 1968.
- *King Bidgood's in the Bathtub*, Audrey Wood, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985.
- *The Little Engine That Could,* Watty Piper, Platt, 1961.
- *The Rose in My Garden,* Arnold and Anita Lobel, Greenwillow, 1984.
- *The Three Little Pigs*, Paul Galdone, Clarion, 1970.
- *Where's Spot?,* Eric Hill, Putnam, 1980.

"Little pig, little pig, let me come in. Not by the hair of my chinny chin chin."

Wordless Picture Books

Wordless picture books contain no words; the story is told entirely with pictures arranged in sequence. A very young child can tell the story through the pictures. Wordless picture books can help a beginning reader develop the concept of a story.

- *The Adventures of Paddy Pork*, John Goodall, Harcourt, 1968.
- *A Boy, A Dog, and a Frog,* Mercer Mayer, Dial, 1967.
- *Deep in the Forest,* Brinton Turkle, Dutton, 1967.
- *Frog, Where Are You?*, Mercer Mayer, Dial, 1969.
- *The Great Escape,* Philipe Dupasquier, Houghton Mifflin, 1988.
- *The Grey Lady and the Strawberry Snatcher,* Molly Bang, Four Winds, 1980.
- *Little Red Riding Hood,* John Goodall, Antheneum, 1988.
- *The Mystery of the Giant Footprints,* Fernando Drahn, Dutton, 1977.
- *Pancakes for Breakfast,* Tomie dePaola, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978.
- *The Snowman,* Raymond Briggs, Random, 1978.
- *A Story to Tell*, Dick Bruna, Price Stern, 1968.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

"A warm smile is the universal language of kindness."

– Ward

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

Picture Books with Text

Picture books with text tell a story through a combination of text and illustrations so that the meaning conveyed in the text is expanded through the pictures. The illustrations should catch and hold the child's interest, the art working with the text to amplify the story. Children prefer books with interesting words, simple sentences, and language that has an internal rhythm, a melody, and a natural beat. In addition, the book must have a clear plot and a satisfying resolution at the end.

- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day,* Judith Viorst, Atheneum, 1976.
- *Curious George,* H.A. Rey, Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
- *Frederick,* Leo Lionni, Pantheon, 1966.
- *Frog and Toad are Friends,* Arnold Lobel, Harper, 1979.
- *Heckedy Peg,* Audrey Wood, Harcourt, 1987.
- *Ira Sleeps Over,* Bernard Waber, Houghton Mifflin, 1975.
- *The Mysterious Tadpole,* Steven Kellogg, Dial, 1979.
- *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble,* William Steig, Simon and Shuster, 1969.
- *The Very Hungry Caterpillar,* Eric Carle, Philomel/Putnam, 1986.
- *Where the Wild Things Are,* Maurice Sendak, Harper, 1984.

"George was curious!"
– Rey

Poetry

Children prefer poems that are humorous. They enjoy the rhythm and rhyme. Sometimes they can fill in the rhyming word.

- *Celebrations: A New Anthology of Black American Poetry,* A. Adoff, Follett, 1977.
- *Dogs and Dragons, Trees and Dreams,* K. Kuskin, Harper Row, 1980.
- *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children,* Jack Prelutsky, Random House, 1983.
- *Read-Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young,* Jack Prelutsky, Knopf, 1986.
- *Side by Side: Poems to be Read Together,* Lee Bennett Hopkins, Simon and Shuster, 1988.
- *Sing a Song of Popcorn: Every Child's Book of Poems,* Beatrice Schenk de Regniers, Scholastic, 1988.
- *You Read to Me, I'll Read to You,* John Ciardi, Harper, 1987.
- *The New Kid on the Block,* Jack Prelutsky, Greenwillow, 1984.
- *Where the Sidewalk Ends,* Shel Silverstein, Harper Row, 1974.
- *A Word or Two With You,* Eve Merriam, Atheneum, 1981.
- *I Met a Man,* John Ciardi, Houghton Mifflin, 1961.
- *Light in the Attic,* Shel Silverstein, Harper Row, 1981.
- *Mother Goose: A Treasury of Best Loved Rhymes,* Watty Piper, Platt, 1972.

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

"There's something about me
That I'm knowing.
There's something about me
That isn't showing.
I'm growing!"
– Anonymous

BOOKS RECOMMENDED FOR READING ALOUD TO CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

CONCEPT BOOKS

Concept books are simple informational books that contribute to the child's expanding language by providing numerous examples of a concept such as the concept of numbers, shapes, or colors.

- *Colors,* John Reiss, Bradbury, 1969.
- *The Emergency Room,* Anne Rockwell, MacMillan, 1985.
- *Have You Seen My Duckling?,* Nancy Tafuri, Penguin, 1986.
- *I Like the Library,* Anne Rockwell, Dutton, 1977.
- *My Back Yard,* Anne Rockwell, MacMillan, 1984.
- *Numbers,* John Reiss, Bradbury, 1971.
- *Over, Under and Through!,* Tana Hoban, MacMillan, 1973.
- *Opposites,* John Burningham, Crown, 1986.
- *Shapes,* John Reiss, Bradbury, 1974.
- *When I Go Visiting,* Anne Rockwell, MacMillan, 1984.

Note: The lists of recommended books are just a small sample of the books available for young children. You can find additional listings of read-aloud books in the following books:

- *Real Books for Reading,* L. Hart-Hewins and J. Wells, Heinemann, 1990.
- *The New Read-Aloud Handbook,* Jim Trelease, Viking Penguin, 1989.
- *The New York Times Parent's Guide to the Best Books for Children,* Eden Ross Lipson, Editor; Random House, 1988.
- *Raising Readers: A Guide to Sharing Literature with Young Children,* Linda Lamme, Walker Publishing, 1980.

"Man's mind, once stretched by a new idea, never regains its original dimensions."

– Holmes

ENDNOTES

1. Debbie Savage, "Lap-Reading in a Headstart Classroom," unpublished paper, University of Florida, 1990.

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